

R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 011 211

RC 000 410

SUMMARY OF THE EAU CLAIRE COUNTY YOUTH STUDY AND SOME  
SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS.

BY- THURSTON, JOHN R. AND OTHERS

PUB DATE 30 APR 64

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.09 HC-\$1.32 33P.

DESCRIPTORS- \*STUDENT BEHAVIOR, \*TEACHER ROLE, FAMILY  
INFLUENCE, PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS, TEACHING TECHNIQUES,  
DISADVANTAGED YOUTH, RESPONSIBILITY, BEHAVIOR RATING SCALES,  
CLASSROOMS, BEHAVIOR, \*BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS, CLASSROOM RESEARCH,  
SELF CONCEPT, BEHAVIOR PATTERNS, PARENTAL BACKGROUND,  
TEACHERS, PERCEPTION, BEHAVIOR STANDARDS, INTERVIEWS,  
QUESTIONNAIRES, SURVEYS, PSYCHOLOGY, FACTOR STRUCTURE,  
SOCIOLOGY, SOCIALIZATION, PSYCHOTHERAPY, EAU CLAIRE COUNTY

THIS DOCUMENT DESCRIBES A RESEARCH STUDY IN WHICH THE  
CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR OF EQUAL NUMBERS OF TEACHER-APPROVED AND  
TEACHER-DISAPPROVED YOUNGSTERS WAS ANALYZED IN RELATION TO  
FAMILY BACKGROUNDS. THE STUDENTS WERE FURTHER DIVIDED EVENLY  
INTO RURAL AND URBAN GROUPS AND END OF YEAR THIRD-, SIXTH-,  
AND NINTH-GRADE STUDENTS. A SECOND LIST WAS GENERATED 2 WEEKS  
AFTER THE FIRST ONE. THE TEACHER'S ROLE IN ANALYSIS AND  
CORRECTION OF BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS IS DEFINED, AND SPECIFIC  
PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING STUDENT AGGRESSION IN THE CLASSROOM  
ARE OUTLINED. THE TWO LISTS WERE CORRELATED TO DETERMINE THE  
CONSISTENCY OF BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS IN DIFFERENT CHILDREN AS  
PERCEIVED BY TEACHERS IN THE PROJECT. THE PURPOSE OF THE USE  
OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS IN STUDYING BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS WAS  
DESCRIBED. (FS)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE  
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE  
PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS  
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION  
POSITION OR POLICY.

**Summary of The Eau Claire County Youth Study  
and Some Suggestions for Teachers**

This investigation was supported by Public Health Service Research  
Grant 5R11 MH 00672-03 from the Institute of Mental Health -  
May 1, 1961 to April 30, 1964.

ED011211

### Advisory Committee

John A. Bacharach  
Lawrence L. Bennett, Jr.  
John Bowman  
Mrs. Frances G. Coffman  
Homer E. DeLong  
Robert J. Gilbride  
Mrs. Walter Gold  
Hon. Connor T. Hansen  
Gail D. Hansis  
Mrs. Harold Kaeding  
Paul H. Kusuda  
James F. Lewis, Ph.D.

Harold L. MacLaughlin  
John H. Manz  
Mrs. Olga Martin  
James A. Riley  
Father John D. Rossiter  
Rev. Roy B. Schmeichel  
Lloyd H. Thompson  
Orry C. Walz, Ph.D.  
Jennie L. Webster  
Douglas G. Weiford  
Wallace C. Westlund  
Lester E. Wogahn

### Staff

#### Project Director

John R. Thurston, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Psychology  
Wisconsin State University - Eau Claire

#### Co-Director

John F. Feldhusen, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Psychology  
Purdue University

#### Research Associate

James J. Benning, Ed.D.  
Associate Professor of Psychology  
Wisconsin State University - Eau Claire

#### Consultant

Veda W. Stone  
Community Services Section  
Division for Children and Youth

#### Interview-Counseling Specialist

Mrs. I. T. Harstad

#### Project Administrator

Mrs. T. M. Ager

#### Secretary

Mrs. Dorothy Mercier

## **Summary of The Eau Claire County Youth Study and Some Suggestions For Teachers**

### **The Research**

The major interest in this study is the understanding of classroom behavior of students. A total of 384 boys and girls were selected at the end of the third and sixth grades and in mid year of the ninth grade for intensive study during the following school year and summer. The primary basis of selection was the "approved" or "disapproved" behavior status in the classroom. Equal representation from within urban areas and rural or farm areas outside the city were included.

Each of the third, sixth, and ninth grade teachers in public and parochial schools throughout Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, was asked to nominate from his class the two boys and two girls who displayed the most approved behavior and the two boys and the two girls who displayed the most disapproved behavior. A Behavior Rating Form and Behavior Problems Check List were especially developed to facilitate these nominations.

Nominations were secured from 259 teachers in public and parochial schools in Eau Claire County, Wisconsin. There were 85 third grade teachers, 90 sixth grade teachers, and 84 ninth grade teachers who completed nominations from 59 public schools and from 4 parochial schools.

One hundred ninety-two disapproved youngsters were drawn randomly from a pool of 568 nominations but within the limitations of grade level, sex, and urban-rural residence and with an additional requirement that

there be at least two items checked on the Behavior Problems Check List.

The 192 approved children were drawn randomly from a pool of 982 nominations but within the same limitations for grade, sex, and home location.

A trained interviewer-examiner was assigned to conduct the complete interviewing and testing of a selected child and his family. The interviewer was never informed as to the approved or disapproved status of the selected child.

The interviewer met with the father, mother, and child individually to secure responses to structured interview instruments. The complete contact with one child and his family took from six to eight hours. On the basis of his evaluation of the family, the interviewer rated the family according to the Glueck factors and other scales. The interviewer also administered the KD Proneness Scale, the Sentence Completion Form, and the Situation Exercises to each child.

In brief, the interview instruments were designed to secure information about child-rearing practices, methods of discipline, family interactions, church and social activities, methods of supervision, the nature of the child's social and leisure-time activities, the major goals of the child and his parents, and a number of background factors such as the parents' education and marital history.

The focus of this study has been the children identified by their teachers as manifesting consistently "approved" or "disapproved" behavior in the classroom. Intensive evaluation of their personal backgrounds and activities suggests that it might be appropriate to refer to

these two groups as the "advantaged" and the "disadvantaged" children.

It has been demonstrated that there are marked psycho-social differences, in terms of advantage between these "approved" and "disapproved" children which very likely have affected their past experiences, assert impact on their present functioning, and may have a profound influence upon their future lives.

In this study, the paramount importance of the family in the child's life was reaffirmed. Strong relationships were demonstrated between classroom behavior and various facets of the family life with which the child is and has been associated.

As contrasted to the "approved" or "advantaged" child, the "disapproved" child in general is found to grow up with the following familial "disadvantages:"

1. The discipline by the father is either lax, overly strict, or erratic.
2. The supervision by the mother is at best only fair or it is downright inadequate.
3. The parents are indifferent or even hostile toward the child.
4. The family members are scattered in diverse activities and the family operates only somewhat as a unit or perhaps not at all.
7. The parents find many things to disapprove of in their child.

These statements constitute the bold strokes which paint the composite picture of the disapproved child's family. Probably no family of such a child would be described in all of these terms. Nor is it likely that many

families of approved children would be completely free from these disadvantages. It seems likely, however, that the more often these features are noted in a child's family, the more likely there is to be aggressive behavior in the classroom. It might be said that these "disadvantages" are associated with the development of a predisposition toward classroom aggression. These areas of family difficulty reverberate and manifest their results in the classroom.

In the theoretical framework in which this study is operating, these "disadvantages" would constitute the source of aggression-eliciting frustration for the child within the home which might well be generalized to the school. The school thus elicits aggression because of its qualitative resemblance to the frustrations of the home. In addition, the school imposes its own demands and frustrations upon the "disadvantaged" child which may in turn generate more aggression to be expressed in the classroom and elsewhere.

It is certainly beyond the scope of this study to do more than speculate as to how these "disadvantages" came to be. This would seem to be a most appropriate area for further intensive and specific research. It seems reasonable, however, to suggest that the nature of the family reflects the personalities, attitudes, ideals, and happiness of its individual members. Speaking generally, it would seem that uncertainty and indecision seem to be characteristics of the disapproved parents. They tend to deprecate their influence on the development of their child. They are inclined to assign responsibility for his actions to others. Those who indicate church

attendance do not always attend as regularly as might be expected. In many instances, they do not appear to provide meaningful models which the child can use as a point of reference in his own behavior development. In many cases, it may be "do not as I do, but as I say." The influence of these parents seems to take the form of much "don't" or "don't care" but very little "do."

It is of interest to mention the relationship of parental occupation and education to the family's relationship to classroom aggression. Parents with low occupational and educational level are likely to have children with such aggressive problems. It seems that lower educational level generally impels the individual into lower occupational levels. These lower type jobs, with all their consequent fatigue, poor economic present and future, boredom, and lack of personal reward, would exaggerate existing personality problems within the home and hence directly influence the home atmosphere in an unhappy fashion. On the basis of our findings, the conditions of living in the rural areas would seem to be particularly conducive to the development of these "disadvantages." Speculatively, it would seem that the deprived socio-economic circumstances and minority status might operate in a similar fashion to set the stage for family turmoil and frustration which in turn facilitates the development of aggressive tendencies in its members.

As compared to "approved" or "advantaged" child, the "disapproved" child tends to manifest the following characteristics, most of which work to his "disadvantage" in competing effectively in the classroom and

presumably elsewhere:

1. The child is argumentative and aggressive in the classroom.
2. The child is apt to have low or only average intelligence.
3. The child is likely to have a low opinion of adults, including teachers, and is sometimes harsh in his evaluation of them.
4. The child, particularly if a girl, rejects its parents as models for its behavior.
5. The child is oriented toward the world outside the classroom.

Once again, it should be pointed out that no two disapproved children manifest their aggression in exactly the same manner nor to the same degree. Neither does each one demonstrate all of the above mentioned characteristics involving inadequacy, aggression, and attempts at escape. Nor would it be likely that many "approved" children would be completely free from these "disadvantages." But these "disadvantages" when present are likely to be extremely self-defeating in the classroom to the student possessing them.

In view of these aforementioned substantial differences between the approved and disapproved groups in terms of familial-personal "advantages" and "disadvantages" it is of interest to find such modest differences between these groups on the personality tests. The differences between the approved and disapproved are extremely slight during the early grades, but are becoming substantial by the ninth grade. These findings suggest the development of a self-concept involving aggression. It may be that aggressive or non-aggressive tendencies become substantial, stable elements of the individual's personality after he has been in school some time.

The early misbehaviors of the classroom aggressors may be reactions based mostly upon the formal similarity of the classroom to home and its frustrations. These reactions result in further difficulties for the child which in turn make the classroom per se a more and more likely source of frustration for the child. A form of vicious, downward spiraling cycle may thus emerge. In time he may become identified more and more with other disapproved youngsters and less and less with students who conduct themselves in an approved manner. He may come to regard himself as unruly, disruptive, tardy and so forth. He will seek out the company of those other students who share a similar designation. Over its period of development, this reactional pattern becomes more and more a part of the personality or stable behavior pattern of the disapproved child.

For the approved or advantaged child, a similar process is occurring, although in the opposite direction. He is less likely to have much in the form of frustration in the home. He has less aggression to express. The likelihood of generalizing in his aggression to the school is slight. He comes to school better prepared to meet its challenges. He profits from his academic experiences and gains some satisfaction on this basis. His emerging self-concept is described in the terms of approved behavior. He looks at himself in terms of these favorable words. He is less likely to engage in behavior which is contrary to this developing self-image, for to do so might result in his having to relinquish favor and prestige. He seeks out other individuals who would be described in similar terms. All of these forces and experiences tend to impel the approved children into common experiences with one another.

Thus, both approved and disapproved children find themselves exposed to increasingly different environments and experiences which over a period of time will become manifest in different personality patterns. The results of this study suggest, if this point of view has substance, that remediation might best be attempted in the early grades before these self-concepts and personality patterns become stabilized. Depending upon the personnel available and the nature of the problem involved, the responsibility for initiating changes devolves upon teachers, clergy, psychologists, social workers, or guidance counselors.

If one grants the need for early intervention and uses the frame of reference of this study, help for the classroom aggressor might take the form of helping to alleviate aggression-inducing frustration with the home or the classroom. Extended contact with the parents might be appropriate in alleviating the relevant difficulties within the home. The role of the church might also be substantial in this regard. If these sources of frustration within the home cannot be reduced materially, then it might be necessary to concentrate on the classroom and facilities outside of the home. Attempts might be made to offset the aggressions engendered in the classroom by helping the child to experience success and satisfaction therein and allowing him to express these aggressions in an acceptable fashion.

In working with a classroom aggressor, the interested individual would find it helpful to know the nature and significance of the disadvantages which are influencing the child. The findings of the Youth Study would appear to constitute a substantial basis for directed investigation. The study

offers a check list of psycho-social factors likely to be important in understanding the causes of a child's behavior. In each case the investigator would have to assess the relative importance of the underlying factors.

In evaluating the significance of this research, it is suggested that an overview of the child's total functioning would be most helpful. (Research evidence which focuses on a single isolable aspect of the child's life may afford no understanding of the larger molar units of behavior which are of practical concern.) Research may be viewed as significant if the findings have practical value in this study, if the results are helpful to the practitioner who is trying to work with the problem of aggression in the classroom.

The significance of research may also be evaluated by the extent to which reliable data is developed which will inspire and serve as the springboard for further research. Is it a step in this long journey toward a better understanding of children? In this research, the demonstration of general relationships of psycho-social factors to classroom behavior immediately suggests at least two additional areas of study: 1) Which of these factors, either singly or in unique combinations, are related to particular forms of classroom misbehavior? What, for example, is the kind of family circumstance most likely to be characteristic of a child who manifests his aggression verbally as contrasted to those of a child who expresses his aggression in physical ways? 2) How did these familial "disadvantages" come to be and what do they actually represent? For example, if overly-

strict father discipline is related to classroom aggression, what gives rise to it? In one case, such excessive discipline could represent action that he "knows" is the best way of proceeding to help his child. In another case, it could represent a belief that he must proceed as his father had before him. In still another, it might represent a pathetic effort to control an unhappy home situation which was threatening to him personally. Knowledge of the origin and meaning of the psycho-social factors associated with aggression is important if the classroom aggressors are to be helped most effectively.

It seems abundantly clear that the problem of classroom aggression is so serious and widespread as to justify research which will lead to increased understanding regarding it. However, if as has been suggested, there is a relationship between classroom aggression and school dropout and juvenile delinquency, the importance of and urgency for research in this area is increased enormously.

### The Teacher's Role

For some time the demands being made upon the classroom teacher in our schools have been increasing. The psychologist would like to have teachers become much more knowledgeable in the areas of mental hygiene and emotional adjustment of students. The sociologist wants the school to assist in improving the social and economic life of the classroom and community. The educational technologist urges a new emphasis on methods of instruction, mechanical devices, programmed learning, television, and many others. Particular academic disciplines, biology, mathematics, English, social studies and foreign languages, are stressing the need for a new and bolstered curriculum. Thus, keeping all this in mind there is little wonder that some people feel the teacher's position is a virtually impossible one in that it requires he be all things to all people.

In addition to all these expectations and demands made upon teachers, the task of understanding and dealing with behavior problems remains an important one. The difficulties inherent in handling classroom misbehaviors are becoming accentuated by an increase in sheer numbers of students and what appears to be a marked tendency for large numbers of parents to delegate responsibilities for child discipline to the schools. It should be understood clearly that the stress placed upon the importance of the teacher's role in handling the classroom aggressor is not to be viewed as something in addition to everything else, as yet another straw on the already breaking back of the camel. The teacher is faced with this difficulty already and has responsibility to assist in its resolutions.

Classroom misbehaviors vary in kind and degree, from the "normal" disturbance to outright aggression. While lacking the possibly ominous quality of the classroom aggressor, the generally more ill-controlled quality of much student behavior further dissipates the limited time and energy of the teacher. But the teacher's importance with specific reference to the classroom aggressor and its potential correlate of juvenile delinquency must be stressed. As has been suggested previously, consistent misbehavior in the classroom may be a precursor of more severe behavioral deviations called "delinquency."

In this section, an attempt will be made to specify what the teacher can and what he cannot do in identifying and dealing with the classroom aggressor and why. Suggestions will be made regarding what he might do and under what circumstances. By clear, forthright delineation of the problem of classroom aggression, it may be possible to outline recommendations which will allow the school to better meet its responsibilities to the individual student as well as the community which it serves. It should not be implied, however, that teachers are best fitted to assume the role of "cook book" technicians capable only of performing specific acts in response to specific situations. Rather it is assumed that teachers will read, understand, and utilize the evidence from research and theory to formulate decisions to guide their actions in their relations with students.

#### Stability of Children's Behavior and Teachers' Perceptions

It has been suggested that teachers' perceptions of classroom behavior

disorders are subject to wide individual variation, the result being that teacher evaluation of aggression in children would be highly unreliable.

This criticism sometimes carried the implication that teachers' perceptions of aggression in the classroom would be chiefly a function of the teachers' needs, attitudes, and personal adjustment problems. However, evidence revealed in this study, recent as well as that cited elsewhere in this report (Glueck and Glueck, 1950; Kough and De Haan, 1955; Kvaraceus, 1950), indicates that teachers may be able to make reliable current observations of behavior which would prove useful in identification of current disorders or in prediction of future behavior deviations and delinquency of their students.

Early in the development of the Eau Claire County Youth Study the researchers recognized the problem outlined above and sought ways of trying to assess the stability of student behavior and teacher perception of the behavior. Obviously, this was of prime concern in a study in which plans were formulated to study intensively the individuals who would be nominated by teachers as persistently displaying disapproved, disruptive, aggressive behavior in the classroom.

The first attention to this problem consisted of several efforts related to the design and instrumentation of the study. Thus, the behavior patterns of prospective nominees were defined in terms of observable behavior stressing persistent or habitual occurrence as the criterion. Furthermore, the children who were to be nominated were to be representatives of the extremes of the approved and disapproved charac-

teristics. To the nominating teacher the following were provided:

(1) a definition of the general behavior patterns which were to be the criterion for nomination; (2) a set of standardized directions for proceeding with the nominations; (3) and a form for specifying the particular behavior traits which the child had exhibited persistently.

These efforts to secure reliable nominations reflecting stable behavior patterns were further enhanced by the careful attention which was directed to authority, supervision, and morale at each level of administration. The preliminary efforts to secure cooperation from school administrative officials and from the community through the Advisory Committee were followed by substantial efforts to communicate this support to individual teachers and others who were involved in the data-gathering phases of the study. A letter was sent by the Superintendent of Schools to building principals urging support; and the principals were, in turn, to communicate with the individual teachers. On several occasions during the periods when teachers were making nominations, members of the research team received information concerning instances in which the principals or other teachers had given reassuring support to a teacher who was experiencing concern about making student nominations or some other part of the study. In short, the teacher who was making nominations of approved and disapproved children, was encouraged to feel that this was most serious business requiring his most intelligent efforts.

Finally, in the tradition of reliability assessment, efforts were made in this study to assess the stability of teacher nominations by requiring

renominations after a two-week interval. The procedures for the first nominations included no means which would leave any record with the teacher to identify his nominations later nor was he told that he would be required to do the task again. Two weeks later when he was confronted with the task again, the teacher was told that this was not a check on him but rather that it was an effort to determine the persistence or stability of the child's behavior patterns. In any event, the teacher was urged to make new nominations without paying any attention to recalling his original nominations.

In assessing the stability of teacher nominations, efforts were made to secure a sample at each of the three grade levels. Thus, 8 third grade teachers in 8 schools, 6 sixth grade teachers in 6 schools, and 11 ninth grade teachers in two junior high schools were selected randomly to make renominations.

The results of this analysis are presented in Table 13.1. The results are presented for individual teachers. The first part of the analysis was concerned with the extent to which children originally nominated reappeared on the nomination list after two weeks. For the 8 third grade teachers, the composite renomination rate is 89.1 percent and the lowest individual teacher rate is 75.0 percent. Three teachers had 100.0 percent agreement on the two nominations.

At the sixth grade level the composite renominations showed 81.3 percent agreement with the original nominations. The lowest individual rate was 62.5 percent, while only one of the six teachers showed 100.0 percent

agreement with original nominations.

For ninth grade teachers, the composite rate of agreement between first and second nominations was 79.5 percent. One of the teachers fell to a 50.0 percent agreement rate and only one was 100.0 percent.

This analysis is interpreted as revealing that the children's behavior is quite stable over the two-week period and that the teachers have made nominations in the light of these stable behavior patterns. For various reasons it is preferable to avoid the term "reliability." Exclusive emphasis on this term would imply that this analysis was purely concerned with the accuracy of teacher nomination. In reality the analysis assumes that the nominations may be a joint function of the teachers' ability to observe and the stability of behavior patterns in the child.

The second part of the analysis is also reported in Table 13.1. After the teacher completed the nominations, he was required to check on a list of 18 aggressive and disruptive behavior problems those which each nominee, particularly the disapproved youngsters, had exhibited persistently. In the renominations, this was again required. The analysis here, of course, is limited to reporting the extent of agreement on these traits or behavior problems only for those youngsters who were renominated.

The composite evaluation at the third grade level shows an agreement rate of 74.5 percent on these traits over the two weeks. One teacher had a rate of 50.0 percent agreement as the low and another, 90.0 percent as the high. For sixth grade teachers, the composite rate was 73.5 percent with the individual low of 58.0 percent and high of 91.6 percent agreement.

At the ninth grade level, the composite agreement on traits was 62.1 percent. The three individual lows of 00.0, 33.0, and 33.0 percent pull this composite rate down considerably. However, over the three grades these results are interpreted as revealing fair stability of observed behavior in the youngsters. The two parts of the overall analysis reported in Table 13.1 are also interpreted as revealing that there is sufficient stability in children's behavior and teacher observation of that behavior over a period of time to warrant further study of regularities of behavior in these children.

With considerably greater difficulty an effort was made to assess the stability of children's behavior by seeking renominations after a one-year interval when the child had advanced to a new grade level. A total of 17 teachers in 8 schools at the fourth and seventh grade levels were selected. It was first necessary to determine the number of children of a group originally nominated who remained together in a new classroom. This data is reported in column four of Table 13.2. The grade transition as three to four or six to seven and the occurrence of teacher change or not are also reported. The number of the original group who were renominated is given in column three and the percent that this is of the total of original nominees is given in column five. The composite agreement at the third grade level is 52.2 percent, at the sixth grade level, 54.9 percent, and for the two grades combined 53.6 percent. Individual group rates vary from 00.0 to 100.0 percent. These results seem to reveal stability of behavior over the one-year interval.

On the basis of these renomination results, it would appear likely

that the nominees would be fruitful candidates for further study. The overall results of the study are also relevant to this issue. All of the 384 children who were nominated were subsequently tested and interviewed in procedures described elsewhere in this report. The results indicate substantial differences in many psychological and sociological characteristics of the approved and disapproved children. It seems likely that stable behavior patterns rather than idiosyncratic teacher perceptions were being examined in this study.

It should be borne in mind that this analysis of agreement was in some ways rather conservative. Take as an example, a child who was nominated as one of the two most approved or two most disapproved children in a class, and who slipped into third place at the time of a subsequent nomination. This would be considered as a complete miss in this analysis even though his behavior continued to be consistently approved or disapproved to a marked degree.

#### Teacher Education for Dealing with Classroom Aggression

When considering the proposed role that the educational system might play in the identification and treatment of the classroom aggressor and the potential juvenile delinquent, there is a need to be realistic. The three basic components of any such effective program would have to be taken into account: 1) the teacher, 2) techniques and knowledge involving the processes the teacher is trying to understand and handle, and 3) the time necessary for the teacher to carry out professional responsibilities

in this regard. In the discussion to follow, attention will be concentrated upon point two as it relates to the problem of the classroom aggression.

It seems likely that at the present time teachers would feel the need for assistance as they attempt to handle the problem of the classroom aggressor. First, it would be desirable to provide the teacher with suitable measurement scales and techniques of the kind previously described so that his assessments would be sharpened, his observations focused upon the appropriate and significant signs or behaviors which relate to the broader condition which is to be assessed. Secondly, instructional procedures might be afforded in printed materials, courses of study, and in-service programs which could very specifically train teachers how to work more effectively with these problem students. Both of these approaches should be supported with an increasing emphasis on studies of psychology, mental hygiene, learning, and child development in both undergraduate and graduate level programs.

#### Handling Classroom Aggression

In considering their reactions to the classroom aggressor, teachers must evaluate both the personal and the professional aspects. The nature of the misconduct is such as to engender a "personal" response. For it seems a possibility that some teacher "reactions" may be determined more by the personality of the teacher than by a calm, objective professional review of the determinants of the behavior. Despite general acknowledgment of the presence of individual differences among students with some

provision for the differences in the teaching of academic subjects, there appears to be a de facto denial of the uniqueness of individual acts of classroom aggression. There may be a tendency to apply slight variations of the cut and dried formula to punish these behaviors, to repress and eradicate them. To some teachers such misbehaviors may appear to be major or minor revolts against the orderliness of the classroom and more importantly, as calculated affronts and threats to them personally. Some teachers equate permissiveness and warmth with license and mollycoddling, suggesting that the accepting of misbehavior will insure its recurrence.

An important distinction appears between the teacher's expected responses to behavior which is consistently aggressive and those to behavior which represents only a transient aggressive reaction. The aggressive act itself may be substantially the same and the differential determination may be made only with substantial knowledge of the student and his background. To the transient act, the teacher is expected to respond primarily as an authority who sets standards. The purpose of the teacher's reaction in this circumstance is to help the child realize that misbehavior is unacceptable in school and in society generally. Whether the misbehavior is consciously or unconsciously determined is irrelevant for all practical purposes. The teacher may use rational explanations, withhold privileges, or employ punitive measures to inhibit and discourage repetitions of the undesirable behavior.

However, when the aggressive, hostile behavior becomes consistent or habitual, it may be an ominous sign of deeper troubles. Punishment

and other rational techniques designed to stamp out the undesirable behavior may be inappropriate because they might serve only to eradicate symptoms without treating the underlying process giving rise to the difficulty. The symptoms may be valuable indicators that serious trouble is present. In such cases, punishment is likely to aggravate the situation by further frustrating the student with consequent provocation of increased aggression without providing for its acceptable expression or ultimate extinction. The remedy must be appropriate to the difficulty. In all cases, but particularly those involving the habitual classroom aggressor, a knowledge of predisposition and precipitating circumstances of the misbehavior is basic, indeed mandatory, if the teacher is to act appropriately.

The results of the present study indicate that the problems of the persistent classroom aggressor may be related to difficult family relationships, academic deficiencies in school, and abnormal development of certain aspects of the need system. Academic deficiencies may be quite readily assessed from school records and help made available through various techniques which might mitigate the frustrations of the classroom and maximize the child's learning and sense of accomplishment. From a teacher's standpoint, these could include changes in the curriculum, individualized or tutorial instruction, or special classes. Difficult family relationships are hard to assess and to correct. However, it has been suggested that parental behavior, if not parents' psychological traits, can be modified in ways that might benefit the child. Presumably the teacher

could try to learn as much as possible about a child's background and family characteristics, first to ascertain their potential effects on the child's behavior. Secondly, he might enlist the parents' aid in developing a corrective or therapeutic regimen. For the present we assume that most teachers would require much more training in psychology and the assistance of a school psychologist before proceeding with such techniques.

The third part of results from the present study, abnormal development of certain aspects of the child's need system, refers specifically to the finding that classroom aggressors show less of needs related to abasement and to superego control. It seems likely that the teacher may influence only slightly the development of abasement needs and conscience in the child. This also remains a controversial issue in which parents and professionals will take sides, some advocating that the child should be taught moral standards and self-control while others advocate permissiveness, relative standards, and a general reduction of guilt and personal responsibility. The teacher may find it difficult to reconcile his own views with school or community policies and the press of individual parents and their children.

It is felt that an appropriate course of action based upon these or other approaches can be charted best if the nature of the problem is thoroughly understood. In view of the extensive use of psychological tests in the search for this understanding, it is appropriate to devote some attention to psychological tests and their most efficient use.

## **The Contribution of Psychological Tests**

The various information from tests, projective instruments, and rating scales used in the study of behavior such as classroom aggression should be viewed in relation to several purposes. The first purpose may simply be to discern if there are significant psychological differences between deviant and other groups of youngsters.

The second purpose comes into consideration after it is established that discriminable groups have been selected for observation. Then attention turns to be establishing the nature and magnitude of differences. What traits, behaviors, and characteristics typify the classroom aggressor as opposed to other children? When and under what conditions are the traits, behaviors, and characteristics manifested?

A third purpose for the measurement data is to utilize it for predictive purposes. This means that efforts are made to determine if currently available test information may be used to detect the covert pathological process capable of generating deviant behavior before the misbehavior emerges full-blown. This assumes that a child who is currently exhibiting socially approved, non-deviant behavior but who will become consistently aggressive, will currently reveal these signs in some way on psychological tests. Thus, a longitudinal study is implied in which initial measurements are followed by careful analysis of behaviors which emerge in the future to ascertain if the early precursor signs relate to emerging deviant behavior.

A fourth purpose of the measurement is the provision of information

bearing upon the feasibility of intervention and therapy techniques. If the predictor system is developed and found effective, the next problem is to find ways of intervening in the life of the child to forestall what otherwise would be inevitable, a full-blown pathological condition. The measurement data may provide a focus on causal conditions in the home, neighborhood, or school. Intervention techniques may be concentrated in whatever appears to be the most likely source of trouble.

A fifth purpose of the measurement data is to provide background information about each individual case in which aggression has emerged. Intervention and therapeutic techniques can never be applied wholly to groups without consideration of the needs of the individual child. Ideally, any program of therapy will begin with an intensive clinical study of the individual child and his background. Much of this information may come from cumulative records, home and parent interviews, and similar sources. Psychological measurements and ratings would be used as a fundamental adjunct to complete the analysis or diagnosis of the individual and to plan the corrective routine.

It may be argued that psychological tests will serve three basic purposes: (1) research, (2) group analysis, and (3) individual analysis. All three are implicit in the discussion above. But most important of all is the assertion that test data does not, in itself, tell what is wrong or what to do. Recent criticisms of the field of psychological testing (Gross, 1962, and Hoffman, 1962) often carry the implication that treatment, selection, placement, or promotion of an individual is wholly

dependent upon test results. It is even suggested that some people believe that the test will tell all that is necessary to know. In contrast, it should be emphasized that information from tests should always be viewed as adjunct or supplementary information. The test information must be set against the background information on the individual such as the case study affords. Both must be supplemented with observations of current behavior of the individual under study. Then it is possible to move toward a diagnosis, and out of the diagnosis to a plan for treatment or therapy. The diagnosis and plan for treatment are products of decision-making processes by one or more skilled individuals such as psychologists, psychiatrists, guidance personnel, or teachers. Human beings, not tests, make the decisions.

#### **The Ultimate Responsibilities**

The classroom teacher must in many cases supply the initiative necessary to identify the problem and attempt its remediation. For in many ways the problem is an educational one which can be handled best in the school. Parent-teacher conferences would provide a natural starting point to broach the subject and make plans. The teacher may find it necessary to specify for the parents the nature of the problem and to suggest or help them discover how they might change their own behavior in order to help their child in his current and potential adjustments. The public as a whole needs education in this matter. The necessity of becoming involved actively must be realized by the teachers, particularly

those on the elementary level, for it is here that it would appear that the most good might be accomplished. By the time the student enters high school, his problems often have assumed proportions which suggest a poor prognosis. Teachers at all grade levels require special training in order to understand the psychology of these problem children and their parents. These children represent challenge; the evidence presented in this study should not be viewed as evidence in support of preconceived despair in their regard. To many teachers who feel overburdened by the demands of their duties and responsibilities, this may seem to be yet "another straw on the already creaking back of the camel." But it is obvious that they must become interested and involved in this area if for no other reason than to satisfy their professional obligations to the students. They must continue to realize that the true professional lives by challenge and by meeting high responsibility. It seems clear that if the teachers are not interested, few others are likely to be. If they do not undertake the initiative for parental contact and education as a prelude to special educational experience and future planning for these "classroom aggressors," then likely very little will be done.

## References

1. Conant, J. B. The Education of American Teachers. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963.
2. Glueck, S. and Glueck, Eleanor. Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency. New York: Commonwealth Fund, 1950.
3. Gross, M. L. The Brainwatchers. New York: Random House, 1962.
4. Hoffman, B. The Tyranny of Testing. New York: Crowell-Collier, 1962.
5. Kough, J. and De Haan, R. F. Identifying Children With Special Needs. Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1955.
6. Kvaraceus, W. C. The KD Proneness Scale and Check List. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1950.

Table 13.1

Stability of Behavior as Reflected in an Analysis of  
Teacher Nominations of Approved and Disapproved  
Children Over a Two-Week Interval

Teacher	Grade	Total Number Renominated	Number Nominated First Time	% of Agreement	% of Agreement on Traits of Renominees only
1	3	8	8	100.0	90.0
2	3	8	8	100.0	66.7
3	3	6	8	75.0	83.3
4	3	7	8	87.5	75.0
5	3	7	8	87.5	50.0
6	3	6	8	75.0	66.7
7	3	8	8	100.0	70.0
8	3	7	8	87.5	66.7
Total	3	57	64	89.1	74.5
9	6	7	8	87.5	66.7
10	6	8	8	100.0	90.0
11	6	5	8	62.5	91.6
12	6	6	8	75.0	81.8
13	6	6	8	75.0	58.0
14	6	7	8	87.5	62.5
Total	6	39	48	81.3	73.5
15	9	4	5	80.0	33.0
16	9	7	8	87.5	75.0
17	9	4	6	66.7	00.0
18	9	3	5	60.0	80.0
19	9	3	6	50.0	100.0
20	9	7	8	87.5	75.0
21	9	6	8	75.0	52.2
22	9	7	8	87.5	50.0
23	9	8	8	100.0	41.2
24	9	6	8	75.0	33.0
25	9	7	8	87.5	84.5
Total	9	62	78	79.5	62.1

Table 13.2

Stability of Behavior as Reflected in an Analysis of Renominations  
of Approved and Disapproved Children Over a One-Year Period

Grades 3 to 4 or 6 to 7

Teacher Same or New	Grade Transition	Number of Renominations	Number of Original Nominations Who Were Now in Room	% Agreement
New	3 to 4	0	3	00.0
New	3 to 4	3	4	75.0
New	3 to 4	2	7	28.5
New	3 to 4	3	6	50.0
New	3 to 4	3	7	42.8
New	3 to 4	5	8	62.5
Same	3 to 4	3	3	100.0
New	<u>3 to 4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>62.5</u>
Total	3 to 4	24	46	52.2
New	6 to 7	6	7	85.7
New	6 to 7	1	5	20.0
Same	6 to 7	2	4	50.0
New	6 to 7	3	7	42.8
Same	6 to 7	4	6	66.7
New	6 to 7	3	6	50.0
New	6 to 7	5	8	62.5
New	6 to 7	1	1	100.0
New	<u>6 to 7</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>42.8</u>
Total	6 to 7	28	51	54.9
Grand Total	3 to 4 & 6 to 7	52	97	53.6